

1 September 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Further Thoughts on Proposed SR-71 Article

REFERENCE: Memorandum for the Record, dated 28 August 1981,  
Subject: Proposed Article, "Development of  
SR-71 Blackbirds."

1. Further to my discussion of Kelly Johnson's proposed story on the SR-71, I realized that I had not addressed the matter of whether or not it was clearly in the Agency's interests to be semi-officially propelled into the forefront by agreeing to Mr. Johnson's request to surface the CIA role in the genesis of the reconnaissance system that later became known as the SR-71.

2. Having been away from the political atmospherics of the Agency's reputation in governing circles, I can only assume that the DCI would not object to having the Agency become the focal point of public interest, when all signs point to the fact that such interest would generate a favorable image for the organization. Certainly the article contains little that could be considered substantive intelligence, since the technology of the airframe and engines has been dissected, world without end, in the media, and there is no mention of any subsystems technology whatever.

3. However, it might be argued that it is perhaps best to let sleeping dogs lie, there having been no "declassification event" such as came about with the U-2 in May of 1960. I feel fairly confident that publication of the article will provoke a number of inquiries of the Agency, and that these inquiries will cover a broad spectrum of matters that we would certainly not want to get specific about: running from purely administrative things to operations and technology. At best, these FOIA inquiries would be bothersome, and at worst they could continue for some period of time, making demands upon talents that would be better employed in other tasks. For example, the photo of A-12s in hangar storage in California would prompt questions about why they were not being used. The photo of ten A-12s, identified as the "flight test fleet" taken in 1964, might prompt queries about why this large number of test aircraft were purchased, and at what cost to the taxpayer, etc. There may be some question about why the A-12 was used as a test bed for the D-21 "target drone," and besides, what was the A-12, a CIA project, doing in the "target drone" business - a field commonly reserved for the military?

4. Certainly, the orderly progression of Kelly Johnson's article would be spoiled without being able to attribute a point of departure to the development of something so complex as the SR-71. After all, it didn't just spring, like Venus from the wave, into a full-fledged operational system.

5. Nothing I am saying deters me from what I might describe as the "common sense" recommendation I made in the reference. At the same time, my ruminating on the matter convinced me that I should give voice to my feeling that the record of public approbation for an innovative program of many years ago may have its other side - an added administrative burden, imposed by all the Nosy Parkers of this life.

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## A-11 Storage

Internal storage thru HQS contract thru 11 April 1977

Picked up under Det 6 SR-71 support contract in FY77

Contract mod dated 15 June 77 authorized preparation  
for outside storage at Palmdale, Ca.